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WORLD YMCA NEWS

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“YMCA Think Green, Act Green, Go Green”

- May 24, 2013



Sixteen young people from 9 YMCAs of the Asia and Pacific Alliance recently completed the green ambassadors training in Hong Kong at the Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village. More than a simple training, this gathering provided the space for the Young people to be transformed at an individual level and be equipped to have impact in their communities in promoting Green activities and sustainable lifestyles.

It is the second event at that level organized by the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, APAY. The first one took place in Chiangmai, Thailand, in 2012. So far there are 26 young green ambassadors trained in the Region

By the end of their training the Green Ambassadors have developed a better understanding of the rapid climate change which is being exacerbated by the excessive emission of greenhouse gases resulting from human activities. The

ambassadors also committed themselves to advocate that their YMCAs continuously strives to educate the people of their communities to be carbon conscious and that the YMCA act as a role model for adopting environmentally friendly actions and policies.

At an individual level the green ambassadors decided to do the following:

- Install solar energy system
- Use own bags and water containers
- Walk to work or shops
- Use energy saver light globes
- Not to eat meat on Mondays
- Be role model as Green Ambassador
- No use of disposable items

YMCAs of APAY were invited to consider the following actions:

- Form Green Team
- Run seminars on environmental issues for colleagues, members and public
- Replace high energy equipment with more efficient equipment
- Establish research team
- Undertake energy and carbon audits
- Reduce consumption: electricity, water, gas, etc
- Use less disposable products
- Promote green awareness; posters, energy saving stickers, etc
- Recycle: paper, plastic, metal, food waste, etc
- Reinforce tree planting programs
- Promote and Install solar energy systems
- Create green ambassador fund
- Share experience with other Green Teams, National Green Team, APAY Green Team

APAY, the regional body has engaged environmental mentors, who are members of the APAY Green Team, to guide and assist the Green Ambassadors in delivering various Green Activities in their own countries. There are now plans to hold Green Ambassadors Trainings at a National Level in several countries as a follow up program, so that a large number of youth could be involved in this program.

“It’s the only place where I can breathe!”

- May 17, 2013



Those were the words of **Rami Shuhaibar** (photo) , a Change Agent from Palestine, during the Training for Change Agents in Cairo, Egypt. He was referring to the YMCA as a safe place for his personal development.

The challenging and changing context of the Middle East area could not be separated from the challenges YMCAs are facing as regards the transformation role they and the World Movement are called to play in the region.

Young Lebanese, Egyptians and Palestinians met for the first regional training in the second week of April 2013. This was their first exposure to the Change Agent initiative. Though the regional structure still doesn’t exist, the World Alliance gathered the youth from these YMCAs and prepared them to join their peers from other regions and Area Alliances, as Change Agents.

During two full days the young people explored the different challenges they are facing in the region and discussed the YMCA response to the issues identified. They have also debated on the increasing need of youth leadership in their area of the world.

Those impressive and strong young leaders bonded with one another by sharing the same dreams and aspirations of building more capacity to tackle the key issues affecting them, using the YMCA Change Model of :
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The conclusions of the meeting include the following:

- Imperative of building stronger and viable YMCAs in the region,
- advancing and modernising programmes to serve more young people from different communities.
- Integrating information technology in YMCA Programmes and processes by exploring growing opportunities in the region
- Enrolling more skilled young people to lead organisational change processes.

Given the maturity and the level of commitment of the group, it's certain that the Change Agents from the Middle East, inspired by the YMCA Change Model, constitute the hope for the organisation's revival in the Region and enable the possibility to envision a growing relevance of the YMCAs in the region.

Participants highlighted the YMCA Change Model as one of the most important learning's of the training, which finished up with a wonderful celebration on a music boat on the waters of the Nile River crossing the heart of the beautiful Cairo.

Sierra Leone YMCA received a National Youth Excellence Award

- May 13, 2013



On Saturday 4 May 2013, The Sierra Leone YMCA received a National Youth Excellence Award as the best Youth Serving Organisation.

“This is an important achievement not only for the Members and leadership of the Sierra Leone YMCA but for the World Movement as well. Sierra Leone YMCA was among the first YMCAS to be enrolled in the Global Operating Plan for Movement Strengthening.

Though a multilateral approach, the YMCA was strengthened around the three pillars: Mission Clarity, Institutional Viability and Social Relevance. This award is a result of what can be achieved when the World Movement agrees to coordinate its efforts.

With the Global Operating Plan, the Sierra Leone YMCA is developing and growing at a rapid rate, ensuring good governance of the movement to match the fast pace of its projects which are growing and deepening their impact. Their slum upgrade includes a multi-pronged approach to empowering the lives of young people in two slums, another four having reached a stage of community project sustainability. The civic action programme was integrally involved in contributing to peaceful elections last year.

Membership of the movement has been boosted with the recent formation of the Y's Club, comprising professionals who have past ties to the YMCA and have now re-joined the movement in the Y's Club. These members remain committed to the mission of the Sierra Leone YMCA and they contribute to the movement's sustainability.

Who ever visits the YMCA in Sierra Leone will notice a strong focus on the needs of the Young People. This is tangible from the entrance of the YMCA buildings to the programme areas. Skilled Young people are members of Board and leadership structures both at Local and National levels.

The YMCA is now a resource for the Africa Alliance as its leadership especially it's General Secretary, Mr Christian Kamara, who is facilitating the Peer Review initiative where selected YMCAs i n the region are assessed by their peers around the 3 pillars of Movement Strengthening.

A day In Jerusalem

- May 29, 2013



Chartering Ceremony Y's Men & Women's Club of Bethlehem, Palestine, April 6th 2013

"A day in Jerusalem" is an innovative programme being implemented by the East Jerusalem YMCA with the support of the East Jerusalem Y's Men and Women's Club, the first Y's Men Club in Palestine. The programme creates an opportunity for Palestinian children aged from 5 to 12 from the West Bank cities to visit the Holy City, that is not accessible to them otherwise. The desire of the Club is, together with the East Jerusalem YMCA, to organise 4 trips every year with 50 children per trip. But things are not that easy and the Clubs face a number of obstacles, one of which is entry permits for the children.

While the East Jerusalem Club, with both men and women is striving to add more value to the programmes of the YMCA, another dream became a reality for the YMCA leaders in Palestine as Andre Batarseh, the General Secretary of the East Jerusalem YMCA expressed it.

"The Y's Men and Women's Club of Bethlehem" was chartered during the World Alliance Executive Committee and related meetings hosted by the East Jerusalem

YMCAS in Jericho in April this year. It is the second Y's Men club in Palestine.

The Bethlehem club was chartered with 17 members, men and women. Its objectives include the following:

- Function primarily as a service club for the YMCA
- Support other worthy organizations through volunteerism, networking and partnership
- Encourage justice in civic and international affairs, abstaining always from party politics
- Keep members informed on and actively involved in religious, civic, economic, social and international matters
- Cultivate good fellowship and finally,
- Support club ,district, regional, area and international projects of Y's Men.

While the newly chartered club is still in the process of developing its activities and preparing projects, it is already collaborating with the East Jerusalem YMCA and the Y's men & Women's club in East Jerusalem ", on the "A Day In Jerusalem" initiative which is funded by the Y's Men Region Sweden.

Members of the club meet regularly with their families and friends. They invite speakers to help the members look at priorities and needs in their societies in order to work on projects that will help to alleviate, as much as possible, the suffering of their people .

The East Jerusalem YMCA work with and for the youth in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Its also supports the Palestinian communities through its programs. This provides a good cooperation platform for the two chartered Y's Men and Women's clubs.

That is why the staff and the Volunteers of the East Jerusalem YMCA host, with real pride, the two Y's Men and Women's clubs, as their fundamental goal is to support them in return.

In the coming days there will be talks to identify common interests and specific tasks, programs and projects to be jointly undertaken.

Leaders of both YMCA and Y's Men hope to start at least two other clubs, in a near future in Ramallah and in Jericho.

With their Joint effort, the YMCA and the Y's Men and Women's clubs are keeping hope alive for the people in Palestine